



Maryland
Hospital Association

Senate Bill 774- Maryland Pathway to Nursing Program and Advisory Committee - Establishment

Position: *Support*

March 7, 2023

Senate Finance Committee

MHA Position

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 60 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment in support of Senate Bill 774.

[Maryland hospitals](#) are facing the most critical staffing shortage in recent memory. According to the most recent MHA data, RNs and LPNs/nursing assistants make up 39% of Maryland's hospital workforce.¹ One in every four nursing positions is vacant, and nearly one in five nursing assistant positions are vacant. This situation will worsen according to a 2022 [GlobalData](#) report, which estimates a statewide shortage of 5,000 full-time registered nurses and 4,000 licensed practical nurses. Without intervention, shortages could double or even triple by 2035.

MHA's [2022 State of Maryland's Health Care Workforce report](#) outlines a roadmap to ensure Maryland has the health care workforce it needs now and in the future. The recommendations focus on four areas: expand Maryland's workforce pipeline, remove barriers to health care education, retain the health care workforce, and leverage talent with new care models.

SB 774 provides a blueprint, aligned with MHA's recommendations, to grow and diversify the nursing workforce pipeline. The Maryland Pathway to Nursing Program will invest in those training to be licensed practical nurses while they work as CNAs and commit to practicing in the state—whether as LPNs or registered nurses. The program seeks to alleviate the workforce shortage, diversify the nursing workforce, and support program participants financially through assistance with tuition, supplies, and basic living expenses like food and housing.

A diverse health care workforce improves access for underserved groups, improves health outcomes, and reduces disparities. Access to wraparound services (e.g., childcare, tutoring, transportation assistance) supports nontraditional students and individuals from underserved populations to access education and complete programs. On average, 20% of nursing students will drop out, with most dropping out after the first semester.² The Maryland Pathway to Nursing Program addresses these social drivers to support success.

¹ MHA Workforce Survey – January 2023

² Nancy Elkins. Failure to Complete BSN Nursing Programs: Students' Views. 2019. Retrieved from files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1252119.pdf.

Before expanding statewide, the bill establishes two pilot sites and creates an Advisory Committee to evaluate the time frame of the pilot, identify the focus areas and what resources are needed. This stepwise process will identify issues and address concerns prior to expanding statewide.

Over the past year, Maryland hospitals worked together to address the high demand for certified nursing assistants (CNAs) by creating an acute care CNA pathway to upskill employees. Hospitals also partnered with community colleges to establish apprenticeship programs for their employees. There is significant interest in these programs, but spots are limited. This legislation will allow the state to build on the success of these programs so Maryland can grow its own health care workforce. Demand for health care services will only increase and will require nurses and nursing assistants across the care continuum. Between 2021 and 2035, demand for RNs is expected to grow 50% in nursing homes alone.³ We need the state's support and investment now to ensure we have the health care workforce we need to care for all Marylanders.

For these reasons, we ask for a *favorable* report on SB 774.

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³ GlobalData (June, 2022). [Maryland Nurse Workforce Projections: 2021-2035](#)